

## INI

John 16,5-16

Easter 4 – Cantate Sunday – 3 May 2015

**Greeting:** To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; mercy, peace, and love be multiplied unto you. Amen.

We hear a portion of the Holy Gospel According to Saint John, which was read earlier:

[Jesus told His disciples:] “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”

**So far the reading. Let us pray:** Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of our hearts, be acceptable in Thy sight, O LORD, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Introduction:** As we look at today’s Gospel lesson, we see that Jesus is promising to send to us a “Comforter.”

What do we think of when we hear the word “Comforter”? Perhaps we think of a nice down-filled quilt that will keep us warm on chilly winter evenings? Perhaps we think of a person, someone who comes when we sorrow or are down cast and gives us words of cheer or consolation or empathy. Perhaps we are like Linus in the comic strip Peanuts, who needs his security blanket.

But this word means more than “Comforter.” In fact, there is always a question on how best to translate this word. Some translators have decided to transliterate the word, that is, put English letters in the place of each of the Greek letters, and the word is *Paraklete*. But this says something and nothing at the same time; for we still have to figure out what this means.

To look at this word in the context of Jesus' day, perhaps the best translation would be a combination of "Advocate" and "Helper."

And, as we shall see, perhaps the best analogy would be to put this "Advocate"- "Helper" into a legal setting, into a courtroom.

Now we know that in our lives here, if — God-forbid — we have to go to law, we face a process that is (a) uncertain and (b) expensive. Justice may be blind, but she is not cheap; good law demands lots of cash (usually, up front). Whether in a civil or criminal case, the best lawyers cost hundreds of dollars an hour. They do not apologize for the fee! And results are not guaranteed!

So again, if, God-forbid, we have to go to law, and it doesn't matter if it a civil or a criminal case, we face a process that is uncertain and could bankrupt us.

But if we have to go to law, we want the best lawyer, the best Advocate, the best Helper around. And that brings me to today's theme: "**Good Help is Hard to Find.**" I'll discuss this theme in three parts:

- 1) Jesus' Promise**
- 2) God's Prosecutor;** and,
- 3) Our Helper**

**1) Jesus' Promise.** Our setting in today's Gospel lesson is the Upper Room, where Jesus had celebrated the first Lord's Super with the disciples. By the time Jesus is speaking, Judas has left the room and is going off to collect his money in order to betray Jesus. Jesus is speaking with His disciples. Jesus is trying to prepare them for the fact that He will be leaving them. As usual, they don't quite comprehend what Jesus is trying to tell them.

While Jesus was with His disciples, He was their Advocate, their Helper, their Comforter, their Protector.

While they were with Him during His earthly ministry, they did not have to fear, for He was the One Who stilled the storm; He was the One Who stopped the mouths of His adversaries; He was the One before Whom even devils trembled; He was the One Who healed; He was the One Who taught them.

Now, however, Jesus says He will be leaving them.

But even more than this, for in the first several verses of this sixteenth chapter, Jesus makes it clear that the people who are after him, — the people who follow the world rather than God — will one day go after the disciples as well. These people will put the disciples out of the synagogue, in effect, excommunicating them, thinking that with this they will cut the disciples off from God. And even more, they will kill the disciples and think that are doing God a favor.

Jesus knows that the hearts of the disciples are filled with sorrow. Shakespeare may have written that “parting is such sweet sorrow,” but here the disciples have no sweet feelings about the impending departure of Jesus. They are experiencing sorrow and pain.

They cannot imagine who could take the place of Jesus.

What would become of them?

What would become of what Jesus had taught them?

Indeed, what would become of Jesus Himself?

Where, on earth, would they find a replacement?

Is good help hard to find?

But Jesus now makes a promise to the disciples, and not to the disciples only, but to us as well, to all who shall believe but have not seen.

Jesus promises that He will send the Comforter, the Advocate-Helper. The Advocate-Helper will have two jobs: one in relation to the world and the other in relation to believers throughout the ages.

First, in relation to the world, the Advocate-Helper is:

**2) God's Prosecutor.** The Advocate will come, as Jesus says, to convict the world "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." He, this Advocate, stands as a prosecutor with a bill of indictment. Indeed, in each of the three categories of indictment, that which is indicted is the "the world."

Why indict the world? Let's look at each of the areas.

**A. Sin.** The Advocate will convict the world of sin. What is sin? Sin is unbelief. It is the refusal to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, He Who came into the world, not that the world might be condemned, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3,17).

So often we like to think of sin as doing this or that. Somehow breaking or twisting one of the Ten Commandments. But far more radically than this, Jesus clearly says that sin is unbelief. Actual sin grows out of unbelief.

This is exactly what Jesus said during his earthly ministry. In speaking to the religious elite of His day, Jesus said:

I said therefore to you that you shall die in your sins, for unless you believe that I AM, you shall die in your sins. (John 8,24)

When confronted by the Word become flesh, these religious leaders refused to believe. And unbelief damns — eternally.

**B. Righteousness.** The Advocate will convict the world of righteousness; that is, that we can only have a right standing, that we can only be justified, that we can only be acquitted of the guilt of sin with

God by the Person and work of Jesus Himself.

Jesus is telling His disciples that He is leaving them. Was it easy to believe in Jesus if He was standing in front of you? Obviously from the preceding point regarding sin, it was no less easy to believe in Him if He was there than if He would return to the Father.

Jesus' point — inconceivable to the disciples — was that His way to the Father was the way of the Cross, it was the way of death. This is the way through which he bought our salvation, our forgiveness. This is the only way in which anyone can obtain a right standing with God. Go to the Cross and believe in Jesus' Way — that He has truly purchased and won our salvation, and bought us back from sin, death, and the power of the devil.

**C. Judgment.** The Advocate will convict the world of judgment, that is, that the prince of this world, the devil and all his works, has been judged by Jesus.

By nature, the world is alienated from God. This is something we cannot grasp unless it were told us by God Himself. And so Jesus tells us.

By nature, people in one way or another, believe that they are reaching out towards God. They think that sincerity of any belief apart from Jesus counts for something. But it doesn't. This is part of the system of deception established by the Evil One.

There is only one, true religion, and it shows us that God reaches down to us. All other religious systems, no matter how sincere, are systems that try to reach up to God, building a system on good works apart from the forgiveness earned for us by Christ.

The deception of the Evil One is that we can reach up to God. But Jesus has judged Satan, and He stands condemned. There is no salvation, no way to God apart from Jesus.

The forces of the world thinks it knows God and the way to God. But the Helper-Advocate will show that the world is wrong.

To show that the world is wrong will be a comfort for future believers, to strengthen them and keep them steadfast in the faith. For here Jesus gives us

**3) Our Helper.** Apart from indicting the world, however, Jesus promises that this Helper will guide us into all truth, for the Helper shall speak the words of Jesus to all believers.

Jesus said:

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me. (John 14,6)

When Jesus says that the Helper will guide us into all truth, Jesus is saying that the Helper will be the One Who always points us to Jesus.

How does the Helper do this?

He does it through the Word, the Holy Scriptures. These are the Words that testify to Jesus, these are the Words that have been inspired, or God-breathed. These are the Words which we can trust, these are the Words that give life.

Jesus said,

If you continue in My Word, You are My disciples indeed (John 8,31).

We continue in the Word by reading these words, by hearing these words, by tasting the words as we partake of Jesus' true Body and Blood in His Holy Supper.

Jesus has bound Himself and His Helper to these Words. Apart

from them, the Helper does not tell us about Jesus. It is here that we find the Helper — alive, active, testifying to Jesus.

And now, of course, it might be well if we also speak of the Advocate-Helper by the title by whom is He more familiar to us — God the Holy Spirit.

And we would do well to listen to Luther's explanation of the Third Article of the Creed:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength  
believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord,  
or come to Him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel,  
enlightened me with His gifts,  
sanctified and kept me in the one true faith.

The Holy Spirit continually works through the Word to call us and all believers to the one true faith and to keep us in this faith.

This is heavenly knowledge given to us in human words. It cannot be figured out by looking at nature or relying on logic or coming to God apart from Christ.

**Conclusion:** Yes, it is true. The Holy Spirit is our Advocate.

The Advocate is our defender against the false accusations of the world. We know the accusations:

“There is a God and there are many ways to that God...”;

“...all that counts is sincerity. I try to live a good life; I'm sure that God will overlook my “mistakes” and look on my sincere efforts.”

“Look, the world demands tolerance; if you keep talking about this One Way business, you'll be a fanatic...”

But our Advocate condemns the world in regard to sin, righteousness, and for judgment.

Our Advocate stands by us. He is not hard to find, for Jesus has sent Him, and He stands in God's Word.

What is the price of the service for this Advocate Helper? For us, nothing; for Jesus, everything.

But yet He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies us. He is indeed our priceless, Advocate and Helper. Sent by Jesus, for you and me.

Good Help is indeed hard to find. But in Christ, God has found us and Jesus has given us His Holy Spirit – our true and faithful Helper. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Now, the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

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**SDG**